

NOTES ON THE LEPIDOPTERA OF CORNWALL

By Dr. F. H. N. SMITH *

Though acknowledged as a botanical mecca, Cornwall is probably too far west to compete entomologically with the more eastern southern counties. However, during several years of increasing concentration on micros there have been some surprises, which indicate that within the geological limitations — mainly absence of chalk — the fauna is richer than suspected. According to a very useful list drawn up recently by Mr. R. J. Heckford, nearly 150 species have not been seen again since they were included in the Victoria County History. A few, at least, of these have been rediscovered alive and well, and some not previously recorded at all have turned up, suggesting that there is a lot of scope for microlepidopterists here. I think it may be worthwhile to put on record those of these two groups that have come my way, bearing in mind that others may also have seen them, and also some other species which may be of interest.

The VCH species are: *Callisto denticulella* Thunb., *Teleiodes luculella* Hb., *Phalonidia vectisana* H. & W. (this was flying in numbers on the evening of June 24th, 1979, at the only Cornish salting I have been able to discover which is not covered by the sea at high tide), *Cydia fagiglandana* Zell. and *Leioptilus tephradactyla* Hb.

New to the list are: *Phylloporia bistrigella* Haw. and *Roesslerstammia erxlebella* Fabr. Mr. P. N. Siddons has taken both of these at different localities. *Coleophora ardeaepennella* Scott, bred from cases found on oak at a wood near here. *Pseudatemelia flavifrontella* D. & S., at MVL near St. Austell. *Scrobipalpa obsoletella* F. v R. at Devoran Creek, and I believe RJH has bred this from larvae found at a different locality. *Blastodacna atra* Haw., one at my kitchen light. *Ancylis mitterbacheriana* D. & S. on the Fowey estuary. *Pammene obscurana* Steph., one specimen at MVL on June 14th, 1980, at a wood where there is some birch. This is a male, with the hindwing costal black scaling referred to in Bradley Tremewan & Smith, *British Tortricoid Moths*, Vol 2., clearly defined. In view of their remarks on the life history, it will obviously be a priority next year to try to find early stages.

During the past few years the micros found in the garden here have repaid much closer study. *Namapogon schwarziellus* Zell. was flying in a small swarm on June 3rd, 1979. On 22nd June I boxed a single "Longhorn". The forewings were fuller with more rounded apices, antennae longer, and colour more ochreous than *schwarziellus*, and I am sure it is *N. metaxella* Hb. *Psychoides filicivora* Meyr. is established on Hartstongue Fern growing just outside my den window. *Swammerdamia pyrella* Vill., *Phyllonorycter coryfoliella* Hb., *Trifurcula immundella* Zell. and *Acrolepia*

*Turnstones, Perrancombe, Perranporth, Cornwall.

pygmeana Haw. have appeared at the kitchen light, the last two being explained by Broom and Woody Nightshade close by. On 26th May, 1979, I took a tiny moth on the wing, which proved to be *Phyllonorycter geniculella* Rag. Later that year I searched sycamore for mines without success, but last autumn came across a number of occupied blotches on some sycamore suckers which I was pruning off, all within 3 feet of the ground, and think they may well be of this species. A sallow in the garden may have produced a single *Caloptilia stigmatella* Fabr. on July 13th, 1974, but it has not yielded to a search for larvae. The *Illustrated Papers on British Microlepidoptera*, published in book form in 1978, kindled a strong desire for Momphas, and there seemed no reason for not starting on my own *Epilobium montanum*. On 4th August, 1979, I found four occupied mines, all in the small top leaves, and, thus encouraged, started splitting seedpods. To my surprise, a fat little pink larva was soon revealed, followed by three more. After a few days these left the pods and settled down to pupation in a mixture of peat and coarse sand. The larvae from the mines spun cocoons in folded leaves on the same sprigs as the mines, and proved to be *M. locupletella* D. & S. when the first emerged on 22nd August — a most beautiful and flawless moth. After a fortnight none more had appeared, and close inspection revealed that the others had hatched, but were trapped by the leaf fold, which had dried too much. This taught me a lesson, that simply sealing in an airtight plastic box does not guarantee enough moisture. The pod larvae had been put two in a box for pupation, and on 1st September I found two hymenopterons in one of these, which I took to mean that both larvae had been parasitised; but this was not so, as on the 4th a *M. subbistrigella* Haw. also emerged. Each wasp was about the size of the moth, but one larva had been enough to feed them. This lesson was about the folly of presuming anything.

Among Tortrices found in the garden are *Lobesia reliquana* Hb., *Rhopobota naevana* Hb. and *Pammene regiana* Zell., the last found freshly out on a sycamore seeding. From further afield, a few other species may be worth a mention. A single *Aristotelia ericinella* Zell. was taken on 5th August, 1978, in the coombe here. I don't think it is common in Cornwall. Spinnings in elm shoots near Padstow on 24th May, 1979, produced some variable *Epinotia abbreviana* Fabr. about a month later. I have found *Agriphila selasella* Hb. in heath, woodland and estuary localities, and *A. latistria* Haw. occurs in two heathy places, to my knowledge. Late in August 1978, *Catoptria margaritella* D. & S. was flushed in small numbers from a wet bog on Bodmin moor. Since Mr. W. G. Tremewan's List was published in 1961 (*Ent. Gaz.* 12: 127). I have kept an eye out for *Platytes cerussella* D. & S. at Falmouth, without seeing it, but it also occurs at a spot further inside the Fal estuary, and along a stretch of cliff path on the Lizard, in late June. *Phycita roborella* D. & S. turned up in the Camel river valley on 4th August 1977. Returning for a moment to Tortrices, *Acleris literana* L. seems very elusive, in spite of beating a lot of oak trees, but it must

be somewhere as one came to MVL here on 6th May, 1960. By all accounts *Acleris cristana* D. & S. also has to be worked for, and this may be why I have only ever seen two, which most considerably came into the house on 8th April, 1960, and 10th March 1974.

Regarding Macros, I had never heard of the Beautiful Brocade, *Lacanobia contigua* D. & S. in Cornwall until last year, when several came to MVL in mid-July at a mainly heathy locality. These were reported by Mr. Stephen Jackson, and I have seen specimens to confirm. They look a little paler than others I have seen from elsewhere. A Pale Eggar, *Trichiura crataegi* L. at MVL in the Camel valley in September last year came as a surprise to me, but I have since heard that PNS has seen it occasionally over the years in roughly the same area. The Slender Brindle, *Apamea scolopacina* Esp. and Fern, *Hydriomena tersata* D. & S. also occur in this valley. We have bred the Black Banded, *Polymixis xanthomista* Hb., from eggs, laid by a captured female, which overwintered easily in a plastic box, and hatched during the last week of April. Provided they have really fresh Thrift all the time, the larvae do well, they began to pupate about mid-June, mainly choosing the roots for this. My son, David, discovered Brown-veined Wainscot, *Archanara dissoluta* Treit. and Twin-spotted Wainscot *A. geminipuncta* Haw. in our local reedbeds about 1970, both in the pupal stage, and entirely unsuspected by me as they had not come to my lamp. There is a moral to this. The Brick, *Agrochola circellaris* Hufn., was another species never seen at the lamp, but which we found abundant at ivy bloom at the top of this coombe. On one occasion it was very satisfying to see American Wainscot, *Mythimna unipuncta* Haw., at the ivy. The Cypress Pug, *Eupithecia phoeniceata* Ramb., is now resident here in Perranporth.

The foregoing is "all very interesting", but how long can it last? I strongly recommend anyone who has not done so to get a copy of the *New Scientist* for January 22nd, 1981, and read carefully an article entitled "The threat to Wildlife Habitats", by Dr. David Goode, assistant chief scientist at the Nature Conservancy Council. One of the several headings reads: "Deciduous woods: four centuries' loss in 30 years." — which is the very nasty truth, applying in much the same vein to heathland, mosses, bogs and chalk downs, all of which are dealt with in detail. Legislation to protect individual species is spurious if by the end of the century there are no habitats left, and unless Governments wake up and put an end to the lip-service they have so far paid to conservation the outlook is sombre indeed.

In conclusion, may I urge any reader not yet an actively supporting member of his or her County Naturalists' Trust to become one without delay. No part in this conflict is too small to be worthwhile.

CORRECTION. — In the title of the Note by Dr. R. S. Wilkinson on page 225 of volume 92, "Thadeus" should read "Thaddeus", and this correction should similarly apply to the entry in the table of contents. — EDITOR.